Welcome! You are invited to join faculty and students from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in a pilgrimage to biblical cities of Greece and Turkey. Visit ancient sites of the Apostle Paul’s missionary journeys and the churches of Revelation, and experience the Mediterranean world’s amazing landscapes. Tour hosts Barbara Rossing and Esther Menn lead frequent “World of the Bible” trips to the Holy land. Both of us love the biblical world’s rich history, as well as its religious and cultural diversity today. Both of us have traveled in Turkey with LSTC’s Muslim students. Barbara Rossing teaches New Testament and has excavated at Ephesus, researching the biblical book of Revelation in the context of the Roman Empire. Esther Menn teaches Old Testament, with expertise in Jewish-Christian and Muslim Christian relations. Our group’s mix of students, lay people, alumni and friends offers an experience of seminary life on the road, as together we explore two of the most fascinating countries of the world.
Tour Itinerary:

May 21 Tue Depart at 11:25 am by Turkish Airline from Chicago

Embark on a meaningful pilgrimage journey of learning and discovery.

May 22 Wed Arrive Istanbul Airport at 05:50 am

Your guide will meet you with “Lutheran School of Theology – TUTKU” sign. Transfer to city center to visit the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Galata tower and walk at Istiklal Street. Check-in to the hotel at 1 pm. Rest of the day is free to relax (or optional Bosphorus Boat Tour). Dinner at the hotel. (D)

May 23 Thu Istanbul

Istanbul was the center of Byzantine Christianity, from the 4th century. Visit the Roman Hippodrome, Sultan Ahmet Blue Mosque, a 17th century sanctuary; Hagia Sophia, one of the world’s architectural marvels, built as a church by Constantine, and reconstructed by Justinian in the 6th century; Topkapi Palace, the Imperial Palace of Ottoman Sultans between the 16th and 19th centuries. Spice Bazaar, Istanbul Archaeological Museum, Underground Basilica Cistern. Dinner and overnight Istanbul. (B,D)

May 24 Fri Istanbul - Greece Border – Philippi - Kavala

Early departure to travel to Greece. Visit the Roman city of Philippi, in Macedonia, including theatre, acropolis, basilicas, and an octagonal Byzantine church. We will visit the magnificent baptismery at the traditional river site where Paul baptized Lydia of Thyatira and the other women (Acts 16:13-15), the first Christians to be baptized on European soil. Overnight in Kavala (ancient Neapolis). (B,D)

May 25 Sat Thessaloniki - Meteora

Walk the Via Egnatia (Roman road) that Paul walked from Neapolis to Philippi (Acts 16:11-12), then on to Thessaloniki where we see two churches (St Demetrios and St Sophia), the Roman forum, the arch and mausoleum of Galerius, the Rotunda, and the archeological museum. At Virgina we stop at the tomb of Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, to appreciate the roots of imperial theology and conquest. overnight Kalambaka/Meteora (B,D)

May 26 Sun Meteora

Byzantine monasteries sit high atop granite pinnacles, many of which are almost inaccessible. Visit two monasteries, including the Varlaam Monastery. Experience the theological worldview of Orthodox liturgies and icons. Worship (Eucharist) together. overnight Kalambaka (B,D)

May 27 Mon Meteora – Delphi

Drive south to the sacred Oracle of Delphi on the slopes of Mt. Parnassus, in a landscape of unparalleled majesty. Visit the Sanctuary of Apollo. Walk the sacred way; see manumission inscriptions proclaiming enslaved people’s freedom. Visit the archeological museum, with the Gallio Inscription. (B,D)

May 28 Tue Delphi - Athens

Tour the Acropolis and Acropolis Museum, the Propylaea, the Parthenon, and the Erectheum. View Mars Hill where the apostle Paul spoke to the Athenian people (Acts 17:15-34) Visit Agora, Roman Forum, new archeological museum. overnight Athens (B,D)

May 29 Wed Corinth – Ferry to Patmos

Travel to the ancient city of Corinth where Paul met Jewish tent makers Priscilla and Aquila, (Acts 18:1-3, Romans 16:3-4) and stayed 18 months, organizing a community of Christ-followers. Visit the acropolis (acro-Corinth), Agora (Market Place) with latrines and Temples, the Bema where Paul stood before pro-consul Gallio; archaeological museum, Erastus inscription. Visit the ancient port of Cenchrea, home of Phoebe, a deacon and supporter of Paul (Romans 16:1). 6 pm ferry to Patmos (including cabin) No dinner tonight (B)

May 30 Thu 2 am arrive Patmos - Kusadasi

Go to hotel to sleep until 9 am. Visit the traditional cave of St John; monastery of St John; lunch at seaport; ferry to Kusadasi. Meet Turkish guide, go to hotel. Overnight Kusadasi. (B,D)

May 31 Fri Ephesus - Izmir

Full day touring Ephesus, one of the largest and best-preserved cities of the ancient world, site of a church of Revelation (Rev 2:1-7). Paul briefly visited here on his second journey and spent more than two years here on his third trip, working with Priscilla and Aquila. (Acts 18:19-26; 19:1-41; 20:16-17; 21:29, 1 Cor. 15:32; 16:8). Paul wrote at least

Tour Hosts:
The Rev. Dr. Barbara R. Rossing & Dr. Esther Menn
June 1 Sat  Pergamon & Sardis - Izmir
Visit Pergamon, one of the cities of Revelation (Rev 2:12). Tour the Acropolis with the steepest theatre of the ancient world, Temple of Trajan, library, and site of the monumental Altar to Zeus (now in Berlin). Visit the Asklepieion, an ancient healing center. Then drive to Sardis, another city of Revelation (Rev 3:1-4) to see the 3rd century Jewish Synagogue, Bath-Gymnasium complex, Temple of Artemis and a tiny 4th century church built into the Artemis Temple. Overnight Izmir (ancient Smyrna B,D)

June 2 Sun  Aphrodisias - Pamukkale
Drive to Geyre to visit the archaeological museum and site of Aphrodisias, with its beautiful marble sculptures, imperial Sebasteion and stadium. See Jewish synagogue inscription listing “god-fearers” (a term for Gentile proselytes in Acts 16:14,18:7) Visit Laodicea, (Rev 3:14; Col 2:1, 4:13-16) and its newly excavated early churches. Visit Hierapolis, (Col. 4:13), an ancient healing site of spectacular travertine terraces and thermal waters, with a large theatre, a temple of Apollo, Martyrion of Philip, and the largest and best preserved necropolis (cemetery) in all of Turkey, Philip the apostle was martyred here. Philip and his four prophetic daughters (Acts 21:9) ministered here. overnight Pamukkale. Enjoy thermal spa. (B,D)

June 3 Mon  Pamukkale – Psidian Antioch - Konya
Drive to Yalvac to visit Psidian Antioch and its museum (with inscription fragments of Emperor Augustus’Res Gestae). Located at a crossroads of three regions, Antioch in Pisidia was a capital city for many cultures and an important biblical and early Christian site (Acts 13:14). Continue to Konya (Iconium), visited by Paul (Acts 13:51, 14:21). Iconium is also the home of Thecla, a virgin saint whose dramatic conversion story is narrated in the apocryphal Acts of Paul. Konya is now a Muslim center, home of Rumi (also known as Mevlana), the 13th century Sufi mystic and philosopher who founded the order of the dervishes. Visit Mevlana Museum and Mausoleum. Dinner and overnight in Konya. (B,D)

June 4 Tue  Konya - Cappadocia
Drive to the ‘Fairy Chimneys’ of Cappadocia, a flourishing region of early Christianity (including Gregory of Nyssa, Basil and their sister Macrina). If time permits, visit to a Cervanserai or the Soganli Village to see the churches and cave dwellings; nature walk in the Ihlara Valley. Optional Dervish performance; overnight cave hotel (B,D)

June 5 Wed  Cappadocia
Optional hot air balloon. , Goreme Open Air museum and the famous painted rock churches, the Citadel of Uchisar or Ortahisar; enjoy free time before farewell dinner; overnight Goreme cave hotel (B,D)

June 6 Thu  Istanbul
Transfer to Kayseri Airport for flight to Chicago via Istanbul
This tour is fast-paced and strenuous, with considerable walking on uneven ground at archaeological sites. If you have any health concerns, please email Barbara Rossing: brossing@lstc.edu

Academic Credit: One course academic credit is available to Masters level students who register with LST and complete course assignments. Credit can also be transferred to other institutions upon arrangement with the registrar and payment of requisite tuition to LSTC. Please contact the LSTC Admissions Office to apply as a special student.